

Message Text

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17

ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 MC-01 ACDA-10 TRSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6804

INFO USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USCINCEUR

SECDEF WASHDC//ISA//PRIORITY

JCS WASHDC

S E C R E T KUWAIT 5698

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, UR, KU

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE GOK PURCHASEOF SOVIET ARMS

REF: KUWAIT 5634 (NOTAL)

1. REFTEL REPORTED KUWAITI PRESS STORY ABOUT POSSIBLE ARMS AGREEMENT WITH USSR TO BE SIGNED SHORTLY COVERING PURCHASE OF GROUND-TO-AIR AND GROUND-TO-GROUND MISSILES AS WELL AS OTHER ITEMS OF ARMAMENT VALUED AT \$400 MILLION. WHEN I CALLED ON KUWAIT DEFENSE MINISTER SHAIKH SA-AD AL-ABDULLAH DEC. 8 ON ANOTHER MATTER, I TOOK THE OCCASION TO ASK HIM WHAT ARMS KUWAIT WAS PLANNING TO PURCHASE FROM THE SOVIET UNION. I EXPLAINED THAT THE PRESS ARTICLE REFERENCE TO GROUND-TO-AIR MISSILES RAISED POSSIBILITY OF CERTAIN COMPLICATIONS WITH RESPECT TO AIR DEFENSE ROLE WHICH US HAS UNDERTAKEN IN KUWAIT WITH PROVISION OF IHAWK SYSTEM.

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2. SHAIKH SA'AD SAID THE AGREEMENT TO PURCHASE

SOVIET ARMS WAS BY NO MEANS FINALIZED, BUT THAT GOK WAS INTERESTED IN OBTAINING THE SCUD AND FROG MISSILE SYSTEMS AND ALSO THE SA-7 STRELLA HAND-HELD MISSILE FOR INFANTRYMEN. HE ADDED THAT GOK WAS ALSO LOOKING INTO PURCHASE OF ZSU-23-4 ANTI-AIRCRAFT SYSTEM.

3. I EXPRESSED PARTICULAR CONCERN OVER THIS LAST ITEM BECAUSE OF THE COMPLICATIONS THIS WOULD RAISE IN PROVIDING KUWAIT WITH AN INTEGRATED AIR DEFENSE, INASMUCH AS GOK HAD ALREADY PURCHASED THE IHAWK MISSILE. CHIEF USLOK, WHO ACCOMPANIED ME TO THE MEETING, EXPLAINED AT SOME LENGTH TO SHAIKH SA'AD THE NECESSITY TO INTEGRATE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEMS PROVIDING HIGH AND LOW LEVEL CONVERGENCE RESPECTIVELY. SHAIKH SA'AD APPEARED TO BE UNAWARE OF THE NECESSITY FOR THE COORDINATION OF THE OPERATION OF SUCH SYSTEMS. WE BROUGHT TO HIS ATTENTION THE FACT THAT THE CLASSIFIED ASPECTS OF THE IHAWK SYSTEM WOULD HAVE TO BE KNOWN TO THOSE OPERATING AN ANTI-AIRCRAFT SYSTEM COVERING THE LOW LEVEL RANGES. THIS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE IF SOVIET ADVISORS-- OR EVEN SYRIAN OR EGYPTIAN ADVISORS-- WOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE DEPLOYMENT OF A ZSU-23-4 SYSTEM.

4. THIS EXPLANATION CAUSED SHAIKH SA'AD TO REFLECT ON THIS MATTER AND HE INDICATED THAT HE WOULD DISCUSS THIS FURTHER WITH HIS STAFF. HE SUGGESTED THAT NO FINAL DECISIONS AS TO THE PURCHASE OF THE SOVIET ANTI-AIRCRAFT SYSTEM HAD BEEN MADE AND THAT OBVIOUSLY THE CONSIDERATIONS WE HAD OUTLINED WOULD HAVE TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

5. COMMENT: WHILE WE HAD PREVIOUSLY HEARD RUMORS THAT THE KUWAITIS MIGHT BE CONSIDERING PURCHASE OF THE ZSU-23-4 ANTI-AIRCRAFT SYSTEM, THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT ANY RESPONSIBLE GOK OFFICIAL ADMITTED THAT THIS WAS BEING GIVEN SERIOUS CONSIDERATION. WE HAVE ALSO JUST LEARNED THAT THE KUWAIT AIR DEFENSE COMMANDER, ACCOMPANIED BY AN EGYPTIAN ADVISOR, HAD MADE A RECENT TRIP TO PARIS TO LOOK INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING THE CROTALE GROUND-TO-AIR MISSILE SYSTEM, WHICH WOULD COVER THE INTERMEDIATE RANGE OF THE AIR DEFENSE SPECTRUM. OBVIOUSLY THE COMPLICATIONS OF INTEGRATING THREE DIFFERENT SYSTEMS FOR AIR DEFENSE WOULD

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BE CONSIDERABLE. WE HAD ALSO HEARD THAT SOME CONSIDERATION WAS BEING GIVEN TO OBTAINING THE VULCAN ANTI-AIRCRAFT SYSTEM FROM THE US. WE HAVE NOT MADE ANY ATTEMPT TO TRY TO SELL THE VULCAN SYSTEM TO THE KUWAITIS, BUT IT MAY BE WILL IN OUR INTEREST, IN ORDER TO AVOID THESE COMPLICATIONS, TO PROPOSE THE SALE OF THE VULCAN SYSTEM TO KUWAIT IN ORDER TO COMPLEMENT THE IHAWK SYSTEM THEY HAVE ALREADY PURCHASED. A FMC REPRESENTATIVE IS EXPECTED TO COME SHORTLY TO KUWAIT

TO ARRANG FOR A COMMERCIAL PURCHASE OF APC'S. SINCE FMC PROVIDES THE CARRIER FOR THE VULCAN SYSTEM, I HAVE ASKED THAT THE FMC REP BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS THE SALE OF VULCAN AS WELL IF THE KUWAITIS SO DESIRE. GIVEN THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE KUWAITI INTEREST IN PURCHASING THE ZSU-23-4, I WOULD APPRECIATE GUIDANCE AS TO WHETHER WE SHOULD NOT RAISE OURSELVES THE POSSIBILITY OF THE GOK PURCHASE OF THE VULCAN.
MAESTRONE

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